

OUR SERVICE FOR CHRIST NEVER FINISHED NO. 2334

**A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

Luke 17:7-10

THESE words are not addressed to the general congregation. You notice that the chapter begins, “Then said he unto the disciples.” Even they felt as if Christ’s words were too heavy for them, and so, when you get to the fifth verse, you read, “And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith,” as if only the very strongest of them were able to receive His teaching just then—He was describing such difficult duties and prescribing so peculiar a path. Mark you, He was not laying down the way of salvation, but pointing out a path of service for those who were already saved.

We must be saved first, and must serve afterwards. To hope to serve Christ so as to win salvation is a fallacy, a delusion of our proud hearts. But to be saved by His grace as a matter of pure favor, and then afterwards to serve Him, having gratitude for our great motive, is the right order and a very different thing from self-righteousness. It is to disciples, then, that the words about which I speak tonight are addressed.

We must not start back at the sight of the service which is required of us. It is our highest honor that we are allowed to be the servants of our Savior, and, being servants, unless we are so only nominally, and not really, we must not be offended at anything that is demanded of us. We must try to fill up the word servant and show the world what a servant can be.

It is the duty of every Christian to turn each common silver word into a golden one. Whatever “husband,” or “father,” or “son,” may mean in reference to ordinary society, it must mean something more when it gets into the church of God. We must fulfill it, we must fill it full. We must make something more of it than it used to be.

So with regard to servants, if we are servants of Christ, let us be servants, as the mathematicians say, “to the *nth* degree”—to the very highest possible degree. Let us elevate and enlarge our calling till, if men want to know what a servant is, they will only have to ask Christ, our Master, and He will point to us and say, “These are the kind of servants that My love and My grace can produce. Money could not buy such and no rate of wages could secure such service as they are prepared freely to render.”

With those two thoughts on your minds, that, being saved, you are servants, and being servants, it is your intense desire to make that word mean all it possibly can mean, follow me while I try to bring out the teaching of the passage before us.

I. First, WE ARE, ADMITTEDLY, THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST.

If the word *doulos* here is interpreted “slave,” as it certainly might be, we are quite willing to be known as the bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. Like Paul, we have no objection even to be branded with the

slave-mark, and with him we dare even to say, “From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

We are the servants, the slaves of Christ, and we rejoice to be so, because in this *lies our deliverance from the bondage of sin*. No man can really be his own master—he will serve either one lord or another. We are such dependent creatures that we must give ourselves up to be either the servants of sin or the servants of righteousness.

We were once the servants of sin. We were “children of wrath, even as others.” We found ourselves born into hereditary bondage, which we also freely chose, for the iron entered into our will, and our will chose the bondage of evil passions and corrupt desires. One way or another, though each of us differently, we resolved to be the servants and the serfs of the prince of darkness, that evil one who still rules over the children of disobedience.

Now that we have become the servants of Christ, we are freed from the bondage of sin—His service is our freedom. There was no other method of setting us free from the bondage of the black prince than that of bringing us under a divine and blessed servitude to Immanuel, the Prince of holiness and peace. We therefore rejoice in being His servants, because it means deliverance from an older servitude, even the service of sin and Satan.

Our being Christ’s servants is *the absolute result of redemption*. We are bought with a price—therefore we are not our own. Standing on Calvary and gazing with wonder at those purple founts whence flow our salvation and eternal life, we feel that, “if one died for all, then all died,” and that, inasmuch as Jesus Christ there bought us with His precious blood, we are His inalienable property and belong to Him—body, soul, and spirit—forever.

Such a price, paid by such a One, in the midst of such circumstances of shame and derision, binds us as His forever and ever. We do not want to be our own—our purchase by Christ is our delight and we willingly yield ourselves up to Him who has paid for us a price infinitely more than we could ever be conceived to be worth. Hence our service is founded upon our deliverance from the bondage of sin and it is also the direct result of our redemption by the blood of Christ.

Moreover, as you sang just now, you helped me to another point—*we are Christ’s by our own pledge*. You remember your declaration,—

**“Tis done! The great transaction’s done;
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”**

You added to that the further resolve,—

**“High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renew’d shall daily hear:
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

If we were not Christ’s tonight, we would not rest an hour until we were. We wish to be His, we wish to be perfectly His—our prayer is that even every thought may be brought into captivity to Him. Our soul pines after the perfect liberty of complete subjection to the will of God in Christ Jesus. Is it not so, brethren?

Have you not lifted your hand to heaven so that you cannot go back? And what is more, has not every desire to go back ceased out of your heart? If you had been mindful of the place from whence you came out, you might have had abundant opportunity to return—but you desire something beyond—your motto is, “Onward, upward, homeward, heavenward.”

You want to get away from the place from whence you came. You belong to Christ. You confess the impeachment tonight, wondering much that you should have the joy of daring to feel that you belong to Christ. Have you any sweeter hymn in the whole repertoire of your heart than this,—

***“Oh! I am my Beloved’s,
And my Beloved’s mine”?***

Do you not sing that in your happiest moments, in the quiet of your spirit? If so, then you are admittedly the servant of Christ.

We regard this service as *a great gift of the free grace of God*. We look back to the eternal counsels and we see the Father choosing us in Christ Jesus—and giving us to His dear Son before the foundation of the world. We see our Lord Jesus undertaking, on our behalf, to present us to the Father, faultless, in the day of His appearing—and it is a great delight to us to feel that it is because God willed it that we are now the property of Christ.

God decreed it. God laid plans for it. It was in the purpose and covenant of unchangeable grace that we should belong to Christ. In this we rejoice, not as a bondage imposed, but as a grace given. Oh, what would we not have given, years ago, when first we were awakened, if we could have even hoped that we belonged to Christ? And now that we know that we are His, and none other’s, and that He will keep us to the end—it is the highest delight of our spirit.

Do not think, dear friends, any of you, that we consider ourselves demeaned by submitting to a very slavery to Christ. We wish to make the bondage as tight as it can possibly be—we desire not to have any will, or any wish, or even any imagination that would go flying over the divine boundaries of God’s will. We would be wholly His—that is our honor, our crown—God’s best gift to us.

More than that, we find that *the service of Christ is its own reward*. What if He never smiled on me? If He would let me serve Him, I would count the fact of service to be a smile. If He should drive me from His presence, if He would only let me glorify Him, I would be satisfied to make that my heaven. To be completely given up to live for God and to glorify Christ—what larger happiness could a redeemed creature desire? There is reward enough to us in being permitted to unloose the latchets of His shoes, or to be engaged in His farm-work, as the text says, ploughing, or feeding cattle, so long as it is but done for Him.

Besides, *there is a rich reward in store for the righteous* and we may look for it. We remember how Moses “had respect unto the recompense of the reward” and without being mercenary, we may anticipate our reward. God will not let His people work for nothing and though the reward is not of debt, but of grace, yet verily there is a reward for the righteous.

In that day when Christ shall come in the glory of His Father, He will award to His saints their several crowns. To those who have been faithful, He will give according to the measure of their faithfulness. “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.” We count it a high honor not to be in the civil service, but to be in the divine service.

How ardently some young men are looking forward for a place, “under government.” That is exactly what I have—it is just what every child of God has—a place under divine government. We do not wish for anything better than this. O you glorified saints, if we may but come among your thrones, or even lie at your feet, we will make no choice, so that we may but see our Lord’s face. and, meanwhile, if it shall be our lot to do the dishwasher’s work in Christ’s kitchen, we will count it most honorable employment—and we will do it as unto Him.

This servitude to Christ is to us unutterable freedom. We are never free till Christ binds us. Here I stand tonight, He has bound my heart and fastened it to Himself. He has bound my hands and they must serve Him. He has bound my feet and they must run in the way of His commands. He has bound my tongue, too. It sometimes speaks amiss, but yet it longs to speak only and wholly for Him.

My Master, tie my eyes and my eyelids, too, and bind every filament of my nature, every nerve, and every muscle of my body, and every hair of my head—and let me be wholly Yours—in absolute bondage unto You, and then shall I cry, “O God, truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant, You have loosed my bonds.” We never have our bonds loosed until, like the psalmist, we can twice over mark the absolute servitude to Himself into which Christ has brought us.

That is my first remark on the text and there is much in it—we are, admittedly, the servants of Christ.

II. Secondly, OUR SERVICE IS NOT FINISHED—“Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?”

Observe, first, that *our service may have been long and arduous*. We may have been ploughing. I speak to some here who have had a very hard bit of ploughing—instead of breaking the soil, you have sometimes thought that you would break the ploughshare, and many a time the bullocks, unaccustomed to the yoke, have been very difficult to drive—and some of them that are accustomed to the yoke, have taken to kicking every now and then. You have not found ploughing to be playing, I am sure.

No ploughman ever does. He finds that it is tough work. He earns his living well who earns it by his ploughing and if some of the gentlemen in London who quarrel with their wages, had to do a ploughman’s work, and to get a plowman’s wage, I warrant you that they would think themselves better off at the work they have to do now. A good day’s ploughing is about as hard a day’s toil as a man can have.

Well, some of us have been ploughing, for the Master has given us difficulties, He has given us trials, He has given us cares, and we have also had to feed cattle. I cannot say that I have been literally feeding cattle, but I have found it more trouble to feed some of you than I should have had in feeding cattle.

I had an old friend who was forty years a shepherd and he lived to be eighty years old. During the last forty years of his life, he was a minister, and he said, one day, “I have had two flocks. The first forty years I fed sheep and the second forty years I fed men—and the second flock was a deal more sheepish than the first.”

I can vouch for the latter part—not that all of you are like sheepish, for there are some of you who are easily fed—but there are others who are not. I remember a young brother, who left the church because he said that I never gave him a bit of bone on which he could try his teeth. Well, now, I thought that if I took out the bone and gave meat alone, I was doing the best thing possible. But this foolish youth wanted a bit of gristle, not that he could digest it, but he wanted something that he could not digest. I could have given him plenty of that sort of stuff—I had no end of it at home—but I save that for my dogs and bring the meat for the people I have to feed.

You can never please everybody and there are some people who are like those described in Psalm 107. I think that David said that they were fools, but I will not say that. And further he says of them, “Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.” There was no feeding them. I would rather feed cattle than feed them.

Cattle will eat what you give them, as a general rule, but we have some in our congregations, dear souls, that are afraid to feed on the promises of God, afraid to feed, even, on the Bread of life. They are not worthy, they say, which is quite true—but then we are not fed according to our worthiness in the covenant of grace. This feeding of cattle, this feeding of men, is not the easiest thing in the world.

The text also teaches that *our service may change its form*. Some of you have been at Sunday School work. Others of you have been at slum work. Some have been visiting the lodging houses—others have stood in the streets and preached for Christ. You have had a good long day of ploughing and feeding cattle, but your work is not done. Oh, by no means!

When the man mentioned by our Lord had been out all day in the field and then came home, he had just to tidy himself up and do a little domestic service, for in the East, the manservant, after ploughing in the field, had to gird his loins and prepare his master’s dinner—and serve at the table, waiting upon his lord.

Well, now, dear friends, after a good long day’s work, you shall have a change of occupation, but you shall go on working still. You have not finished your service yet. Have you had forty years of it? Well, that is a long day, but you have not done work yet—there is something else for you to do. If you cannot go out ploughing, you shall go down into the kitchen and do some cooking. And if you cannot

feed the cattle, you shall bring up a dish of food for your master. This is a change of work for you, but you are to keep on as long as you live.

I said, one Sabbath morning, that I feared I might not be able to keep on preaching, meaning that I feared that I should soon be laid aside by illness, which I hope may not now occur—and somebody said that I was not going to preach anymore, I was going to retire. I shall “retire” when four men carry me on their shoulders to the grave, but not till then, by God’s grace! As long as there is breath in our body and we are able to say a word for Christ, we certainly shall not give up our service.

Nor will any of you, I hope, ever talk about retiring from your Master’s work. If any of you young men ever think of doing so, I beg you to remember what came to Jonah when he “retired” from his Master’s business—and whales are scarcer now than they were then! You had better go down to Nineveh and work away in your Master’s service as long as you have health and strength. There may be change of service, but no retiring from service.

Next, *the servant came to service which required greater care*. When he was only ploughing, or feeding cattle, he could do that in a rough way, with unwashed hands. But now that he has to wait on his master, do you not see how he smartens himself up, how he has washed his hands and face? He would not be properly waiting on his master if he had any filth on his clothes or on the plates.

And he attends to this service with all his wits about him—he does not fall asleep over it. If the Lord calls you to be His body-servant, to wait upon Him in close attendance and high communion with Him—if He gives you more to do with the souls of men, more to do with the church of God, as He may do, promoting you to higher service—yet remember that you are still a servant and you are to prove that you are still a servant by working with greater care, with more of the spirit of a servant than you ever had before.

Dear friends, is it not a mercy for us that our service is not ended? Why should it be finished? *Our dependence upon our Master is not ended*. We burn His candles, so we ought to do His work. Every morning’s breakfast and every day’s meals are His gifts to us—and the clothes on our back are His livery—should we not, then, continue to serve Him? When you can do without Christ, He can do without you. But that will not be “by and by.” You are always depending upon His daily bounty, therefore be thankful that your service is not ended.

And remember this also—it is a blessed thing that our service is not ended because it shows that the Lord has pleasure in His servant still. There is a prayer put into verse, that you and I may constantly offer,—

“Dismiss me not Thy service, Lord!”

Suppose that He had dismissed us and said, “Go and sit down to meat, I do not want you any more. I have no poor child for you to nurse, I have not even anymore cattle for you to feed—there is not even a lamb among My flock for you to carry in your bosom,” that would show that He did not love us with the love of satisfaction, or take such delight in us as He once did. But as long as He gives us something to do, we will gratefully do it, because we will take it as a token of His continual delight in us and that therefore, delighting in us, He gives us something to do for Him. That is my second point—our service is not ended.

III. And next, WE DO NOT WISH TO BE TREATED AS IF IT WERE—“Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?”

That would show that his service was ended. But we do not wish our Master to treat us so. I mean this—*we do not expect freedom from trial*. Do you? We read of Abraham as being sorely tried and wonderfully prevailing. And then we come upon this text, “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [that is, try, or test] Abraham.” Yes, and after all your years of service, after you have been honored in bringing souls to Christ, you will have to be tried still. He will not say, “Go and sit down to meat,” but He will bid you gird yourselves, and come and serve Him.

Also, dear friends, *we are not to expect honor here*. After many years of preaching the Gospel, one might be tempted to say to himself, "I have a name and some esteem among men. I must take care of them." That is a temptation from Satan—throw it all away. Serve your Lord and care nothing about your honor, or your repute, for it is not for Him to say to you, "Go and sit down to meat." If He still calls you to do some service for Him in the defense or proclamation of His truth, do not ask Him to treat you otherwise.

Then, *we are not to think that we cannot do any more*. Do I speak to any Christian who has come in here tonight saying, "I really think that I must give up this service and give up that"? Do no such thing, I pray you. Hold on to it as for dear life. Your engagement to your Master is not a five years' service, like that of a soldier, but you are His for life.

Yours is a lifelong bondage to Him, a happy apprenticeship to your Lord and Master throughout the whole term of your natural—no, of your spiritual life. Say not that you can do no more—there is much yet remaining for you to do. Pick up a new thread and begin to spin, and He will find you more. Take up a bit of iron you have never tried to fashion, put it in the fire, and see whether you cannot make some fresh instrument there. Give yourself up continually to serve your Lord yet more and more, and think not that your work is finished.

And, beloved, *we must not be beginning to look for our reward here*. If you think to have heaven this side the Jordan, you are greatly mistaken. Heaven is to be hereafter, but heaven is not "by and by." This is the place for fighting—out with your sword! This is the field for labor—get you to your plough! If such a wish could come to you in heaven, you might desire to get back again to the service of earth, that you might do still more for your Lord.

When I get to heaven and you get to heaven, if we know that false doctrine is spreading in the world, we shall long to go back and confront the adversary again, if such wishes are permitted in heaven. While souls are perishing for lack of knowledge, let none of us want to be away from the earth—so long as men need us to tell them the way of salvation, let us gladly continue at our work—let us serve God, my brethren, while we have the opportunity,—

*"In works which perfect saints above,
And holy angels cannot do."*

Now is our time for preaching. Now is your time for teaching the children. Seven heavens could not find us another pulpit when once we get to glory—we might almost wish that they could. What opportunities of praying with the sick and instructing ignorant children you now have! You will not have them when once you are in the other world. Therefore use the golden hours you have while you are here below.

Your service is not finished, so do not wish to be treated as though it were. Ask not honor from men, ask not even for honor from God, if that were meant to exempt you from further shame, from further suffering, from further reproach for Christ's dear sake. The further we go in His service, the more resolved we are to give up everything for Him.

When we first started, we may have thought of making some reserve, but now we have gone so far into the river of consecration that we find "waters to swim in" and we can truly say,—

*"Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great
That I should give Him all."*

May you not only sing it, but may you mean it, and practice it, for Christ's sake!

IV. Now we go a step further. WE ARE ALWAYS TO PUT OUR MASTER FIRST.

We are servants and our work is not done—neither ought we to wish to be treated as though it were done. We are not ourselves to sit down to meat, but we are to hear our Master say, “Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink.” I will very hurriedly mention these points.

First, *we are to prefer service to rest*. Service is feeding our Master—rest is refreshing ourselves. If we may have a choice, we must always choose that which will be for His glory. If it is necessary to rest for His glory, rest. But if you can better serve Him by continued activity—even unto death—select the service.

Next, *we must put His pleasure before our own*. I must not want what will please me, but what will please Him. It ought always to please us to have the opportunity of pleasing Him. Did not Abraham run unto the herd, to fetch a calf tender and good, that he might feed the blessed ones when, under the tree, they came to favor him with a visit?

What an honor is put upon us when we are permitted to feed Christ and to wait upon Him till He has eaten and drunken! I can hardly conceive of myself as having the high honor, on bended knee, of waiting on my Lord. If He would but once come to my house, what would I not do for Him? So have I often said, yet the whole of our life should be an entertainment of Christ, our blessed Prince. We should always be seeking to gratify Him, to give Him to drink that which He thirsts for in the salvation of the souls of men—and to give Him to eat of that which He delights in, namely, the holiness and consecration of His people. His pleasure is to be put before our pleasure.

And, next, *His people are to be preferred before ourselves*. His people are His body—therefore think more of His body than of your own body. Let the poor saints be very near your heart—let the man in whom you see anything of Christ be loved because of your Lord’s likeness which you see in him. Always put Christ’s people before yourself.

And *put His name before your own name*. I want you to dwell upon that. There is always a tendency among us to want to keep up our own respectability, and if we are ministers, to keep up our own name. The temptation has come to men who have been eminently useful to found a denomination for the preservation of their name. George Whitefield was saved from that—when some people wanted him to set up a new sect to be called by his name, he said—“No, let my name perish, but let Christ’s name stand forever.”

So say I, let sect go, and let my name go, and let everything go—but let Christ and His truth be preserved. Make no reckoning between a grain of Christ’s glory and a ton of your own. Always think that everything you have has gone already and that you yourself have gone, a living sacrifice, wholly given up to your Lord. If you must be made as the offscouring of all things, as the rubbish on the dunghill, so let it be, so that Christ Jesus may be glorious and every particle of His truth may be set on high in the hearts of men.

This is the meaning of the text here—you are not to sit down to meat as yet, you are to gird thyself and serve your Lord, and your eating and your drinking shall be glorious indeed “by and by.” This same Gospel has a phrase in it which has often staggered me. I mean that passage where Christ says that He will gird Himself and come forth and serve His servants who girded themselves to serve Him. The high reward reserved for you ought to brace you up to the most arduous service as long as you live. God help you to render such service, for Christ’s sake!

V. I close with this remark, WE ARE TO TAKE OUR PLACE LOW DOWN.

Read the latter part of the text—“Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.” I feel inclined to laugh as I read this verse, “Doth he thank that servant?” Only imagine the Lord Jesus Christ thanking you or thanking me for anything that we might do, even if we did all that He commanded us! For Him to thank us for what we do, even if we did all we ought, seems utterly absurd.

And then, how could He thank us for what we have not done, for we have not done the things which were commanded us? We have left many of them undone and we have done the things we ought not to have done. What thanks do we deserve? None, I trow.

Then, besides, dear friends, if we had done all, Christ's thanks, if they were given to us, would be for so little service compared with His deserts. We are, at our best, unprofitable servants. Think of what He has done for us and do not set side by side with that anything that we have ever done for Him who loved us to the life and to the death—who loved us eternally and infinitely.

What have we done for Him compared with what He has done for us? Our service put beside Christ's is like one single grain of dust put in comparison with the mighty orb of the sun. There is but poor comparison there, but there is no comparison at all between the little we do for Christ and the great, the immeasurable service that He has rendered to us. Truly, we are unprofitable servants to Him.

And then, beloved, whatever we have done has all been done in us by Him. Whatever fruit we have, Christ can say to us, "From me is thy fruit found." If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be any love, if there be any faith, if there be any zeal, if there be any holiness—was it not all given to us? Are we not all the greater debtors to God, the more we have done? What have we ever profited Him?

Growing saints think themselves nothing. Full-grown saints think themselves less than nothing. You may guess your real weight by the depths to which you sink in self-abasement. You may estimate your true value in the market of heaven by the low estimate you put upon yourself. May the Lord give us, therefore, to be His willing, ardent, earnest servants!

Oh, never let us have a single lofty thought as to the service that we have rendered, because you know, if we once begin to think that we are very fine servants, we shall not like to do some of the work which He puts upon us. We shall be too proud for that service and there is many a servant of God who is too tall, too big for his place, and therefore he is not likely to do much for his Master.

There is much to be done that flesh and blood will not brook, especially in dealing with some of the Lord's people who are ill-mannered and foolish. But we must learn to clean the saucepans, to do the drudge's work, the servile work, if we are to be true servants for Christ. We must even select that sort of service and prefer it, if we would be like our Master and desire to take the highest place in the ranks of the believers. "These are hard things," say you. They are, to flesh and blood, but the Lord can give us of His Spirit that we may conquer flesh and blood.

Do any of you here say, "I am no servant of Christ and I do not want to be one"? The day will come when you would give your eyes to be His servants, even though you had to serve Him in the dark throughout your life. I would sooner be the Lord's dog than the devil's darling. It is better to have the lowest place in Christ's house than to have the highest place in the tents of wickedness.

If any here are unconverted, I can tell them that the sorrows of Christ are better than the pleasures of sin. Christ's blacks are whiter than your whitest things. Christ's servitude is more heavenly than the world's heaven. A blow from Christ is better than a kiss from the lips of sin. Oh, if you had but one glance, if you could even have but a glimpse at the glory that Jesus has, you would come to Him and beg Him, first to save you, and then to let you serve Him, for it is better to serve Christ in the meanest capacity than to be the Czar of all the Russias, or even empress of the whole world!

God give me but to have a place where, washed in His blood, I may wear the white garments of an everlasting servitude to Him, and He shall have the praise for it, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 17:1-10

1. *Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come:*

We are so strangely made that even good men do not always agree, and there are so many bad men about that they will cast a stumbling-block in our way if they can.

1-2. But woe unto him, through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

To do grievous damage to the soul of the very least of Christ's people, is a great and ruinous sin, nothing can be worse. God grant that we may not do this even inadvertently. Let not the strong indulge in that which would be unsafe for the weak, lest the weak be led into sin through that which the strong brother might find lawful, but which certainly would not be expedient. May none of us ever willfully grieve any child of God.

3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent,

Thou shalt not believe in his penitence? "No, surely," say you, "that is incorrect." Yes, it is incorrect, but that is what many of you do. I was only reading as things generally are, but that is not Christ's direction.

3-4. Forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day,

That is seven times too often.

4. And seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Do you say, "That is too many times in a day to forgive him"? Let me ask, "How many times in a day have you sinned? How many times in a day does God forgive you?" Ah. the seven times a day that you have to forgive your brother are but a small number compared with the innumerable forgivenesses granted to you by our ever-gracious God.

5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

For this kind of patient forgiving seemed too much for them, unless they had a larger stock of faith, and therein they were right. Strength of faith gives strength of love, and strength of love makes forgiveness easy.

6. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Now, if faith as a grain of mustard seed can do this, what cannot strong faith do? What a mercy it is for us that there is so much power in such little faith. A very small piece of dynamite can work great wonders, and within the tiniest morsel of faith, if it be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, there lies concealed almost omnipotent force. Why do we not exercise that faith more? Nothing is impossible to him that believeth. We could blast the very strongholds of Satan with this powerful powder if we would but try it.

7-8. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

See, brethren, our position as believers. We are here as servants. It is not the time for feasting yet. Whatever work we have done, even if it is getting towards the evening of our life's day, we must not think of sitting down yet, and expecting our Master to wait upon us. No, we must go on with our service, and reckon it to be our highest privilege still to gird ourselves and wait on Him. This is not the place of resting or of feasting. This is the day of our holy servitude. Let us work on, ploughing while we have strength for it, and when the sun goes down at eventide, then waiting like servants at the table of their Lord.

9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

Do you take off your hat to your servants, and say, "I am very grateful to you for doing your duty"? Not so. And even be who serves God best, may he expect honour as his due? Ah! no; he shall have honour because of the grace of his Master, but it is not his place to look for it, much less is it right for him to expect it as his due.

10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

And who shall praise us for that? The most self-denying servant of the Saviour, the most ardent labourer for the Lord, will expect nothing of God except to be blessed by His abounding grace. What can we deserve of the dear hands of Him who bought us with his blood? Are we not the bondservants of Christ? "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." Therefore whatever service you can render is due to Him, and unto Him let it be freely given without one thought of self-praise or pride because it is given without one thought of self-praise or pride because it is done so well.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—660, 663, 658

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